

Winter Music Festival to transport students through centuries of immigration

For the fourteenth year in a row, the Friends of the Florence Events Center's Winter Music Festival Kids' Concert turns the FEC's auditorium into a good old-fashioned, raise-the-roof, kid-friendly hootenanny.

Florence mayor Joe Henry will serve as host and emcee to nearly 900 school children on Thursday, January 14.

As part of the annual two-day, 12-band extravaganza that is the Florence Winter Music Festival, students in first through fifth grade from Florence, Mapleton, and Reedsport will be transported back in time the performances of The Trail Band, an Oregon-based eight-piece ensemble that features songs from the various ethnic and cultural groups who have settled over the centuries in what is now Oregon.

"I first heard The Trail Band in 2000 during a concert at the FEC and thought, 'We've got to get our local school kids in to hear this, and give them a top-quality educational concert in a real theater,'" said Winter Music Festival chairperson Rachel Pearson.

The two performances, each for more than 450 kids, are by invitation only to students, teachers, and their official chaperones. Pearson said the concerts provide a chance for each child to feel special and valued for their participation and effort while belonging to a larger, significant, school-wide event.

"These students are not only hearing lively tunes, they are happily absorbing history, folklore, rhythms, and ideas from cultures all over the world," added Pearson. "All the singing, clapping, and laughing to traditional folk songs serve to enrich learning. Combined with songs from other countries and watching examples of native Umatilla and Yakima tribes' ceremonial dress and dance, students get an integrated cultural and art experience they wouldn't otherwise receive. It has a contagious, exponential effect on learning."

Pearson said the cooperation of the teachers is what transports the Kids Concerts beyond a simple music experience.

"Teachers prepare students for the concert by investing classroom time in reading song lyrics, map study, research on peoples and populations, doing related art projects, and more," explained Pearson. "Every teacher receives a CD of The Trail Band's music for classroom use. For example, Deb Dietrich, Siuslaw Elementary's



music teacher, incorporates the music into her classroom curriculum; and Lynn Anderson's Siuslaw Indian Education students will perform the Intertribal Happy Dance on stage with The Trail Band."

In addition, the Friends of the FEC pays for a music teacher to travel to Mapleton to teach the music in a formal setting. In the integrated process, every student has a chance to create a piece of art which will then decorate the auditorium walls.

More information, including artist profiles and tickets, is available through WinterMusicFestival.org. A full weekend pass is just \$45 and includes Saturday and Sunday day passes for all concerts, and admission to the Jonathan Edwards and Shook Twins concert. Individual passes for Saturday's or Sunday's daytime concerts that begin at 11 a.m. are \$12.50 for each day. Individual tickets for the Shook Twins and Jonathan Edwards concert are \$28.

Sponsors and underwriters include: The River House Inn and The Old Town Inn, Driftwood Shores, Pier Point Inn, Waterfront Depot, Art and Jean Koning (Terrace Homes), Grocery Outlet, The City of Florence, Seacoast Entertainment Association board members, the Oregon Community Foundation, the Mapleton Community Foundation, the Kiwanis Club of Florence, Ladies of the Elks, Trillium Community Health Plan, Coast Radio KCST/KCFM, The Siuslaw News, Oregon Coast Magazine, Eugene radio stations KLCC and KRVM, Nan Osbon, Florence Elks Lodge after Grocery Outlet, and Frances & Frank Williams after Nan Osbon Maire Testa, and in memory of Art and Ann Rule.

